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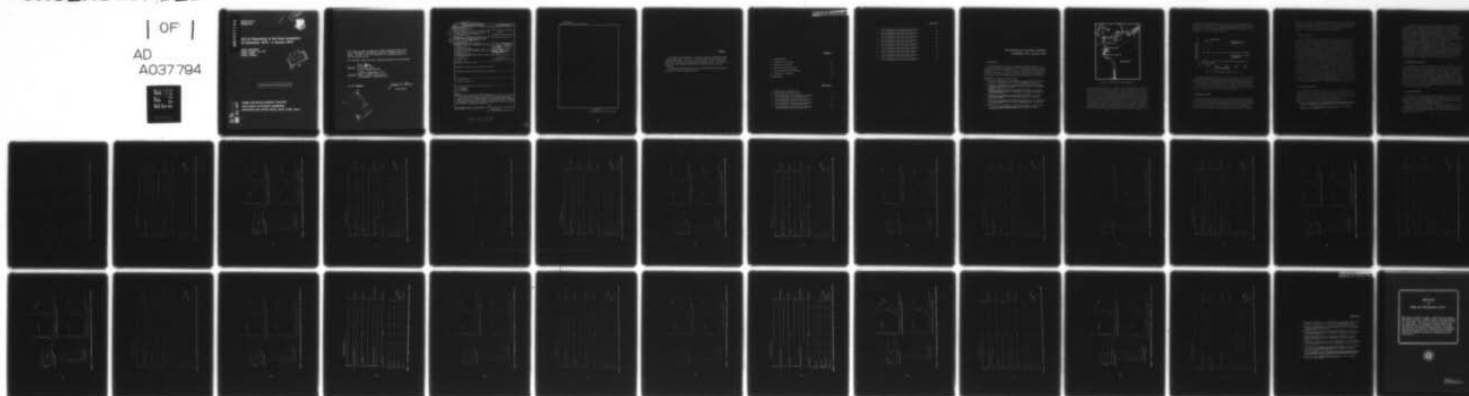
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VLF/LF REFLECTIVITY OF THE POLAR IONOSPHERE, 21 SEPTEMBER 1975 --ETC(U)
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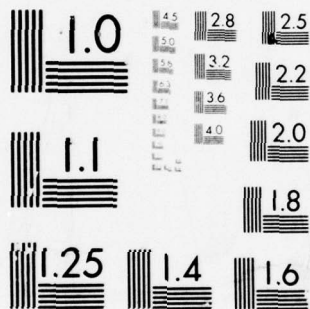
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IN-HOUSE REPORT
DECEMBER 1976



VLF/LF Reflectivity of the Polar Ionosphere 21 September 1975 - 3 January 1976

JOHN E. RASMUSSEN
RALPH J. McLAIN, Capt, USAF
JOHN P. TURTLE
WAYNE I. KLEMETTI




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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER RADC-TR-76-378	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) VLF/LF REFLECTIVITY OF THE POLAR IONOSPHERE 21 SEPTEMBER 1975 - 3 JANUARY 1976		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED In-House.
7. AUTHOR(s) John E. Rasmussen, Wayne I. Klemetti Ralph J. McLain, Capt, USAF John P. Turtle		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Deputy for Electronic Technology (RADC/ETEE) Hanscom AFB, Massachusetts 01731		9. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
10. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Deputy for Electronic Technology (RADC/ETEE) Hanscom AFB, Massachusetts 01731		11. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS 62702F 46001605
12. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office) 1238p		12. REPORT DATE December 1976
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 39
		14. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES * Barkley & Dexter Labs		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) VLF propagation LF propagation Lower Ionosphere		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This report provides a summary of high latitude ionospheric reflectivity as observed by the USAF high resolution VLF/LF ionosounder operating in northern Greenland. Ionospheric reflectivity parameters, including reflection coefficients and heights, are presented as a function of time of day. VLF long path propagation measurements, along with magnetometer and riometer data, are presented as supplemental information.		

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Preface

The authors thank in particular Dr. Edward A. Lewis for valuable discussions on preparing this paper, Mr. Royce C. Kahler of Barkley & Dexter Labs for help with the equipment that made the measurements possible, and Mr. Jens Ostergaard of the Danish Meteorological Institute for the outstanding operation at Qanaq, Greenland.

This research effort was funded in part by the Defense Communication Agency under the Tri-Service Propagation Program.

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VLF/LF Reflectivity of the Polar Ionosphere

21 September 1975 - 3 January 1976

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a summary of high latitude ionospheric reflectivity, as observed by the USAF's high resolution VLF/LF ionosounder operating in northern Greenland.^{1,2,3,4,5,6} As shown in Figure 1, the transmitter is located at Thule Air Base, Greenland (76° 33'N. Lat., 68° 40'W. Long.), and the receiving site is 106 km north at the Danish Meteorological Institute's Ionospheric Observatory in

(Received for publication 15 December 1976)

1. Lewis, E.A., Rasmussen, J.E., and Kossey, P.A. (1973) Measurements of ionospheric reflectivity from 6 to 35 kHz, J. Geophys. Res., 78:19.
2. Kossey, P.A., Rasmussen, J.E., and Lewis, E.A. (1974) VLF pulse ionosounder measurements of the reflection properties of the lower ionosphere, Akademie Verlag, COSPAR, July.
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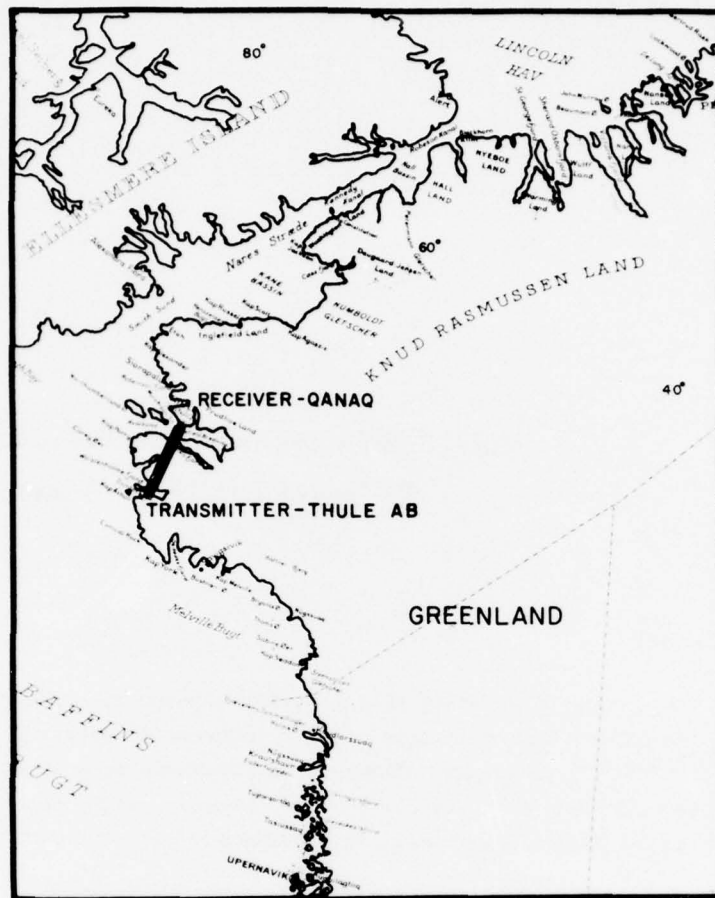


Figure 1. Geometry of the Propagation Path

Qanaq, Greenland ($77^{\circ} 24' \text{N. Lat.}$, $69^{\circ} 20' \text{W. Long.}$, Geomagnetic Lat. $89^{\circ} 06' \text{N.}$). The ionosounding transmissions consist of a series of extremely short (less than $150 \mu\text{sec}$) VLF pulses, precisely controlled in time, and radiated from a 130 meter vertical antenna. At the receiving site, orthogonal loop antennas are used to separate the two polarization components of the ionospherically reflected skywave signal. One antenna, oriented in the plane of propagation, is used to sense the groundwave and the "parallel" component of the downcoming skywave. The second loop, nulled on the groundwave, senses the "perpendicular" skywave component. The signal from each of the antennas is digitally averaged to improve the signal-to-noise ratio of the individual received waveforms before they are recorded on magnetic tape. An

example of the observed waveforms is given in Figure 2, where the parallel waveform (Figure 2a) consists of (1) a groundwave propagated pulse of about 100 μsec duration, (2) a quiet interval, followed by (3) the first-hop skywave signal. The perpendicular waveform is shown in Figure 2b.

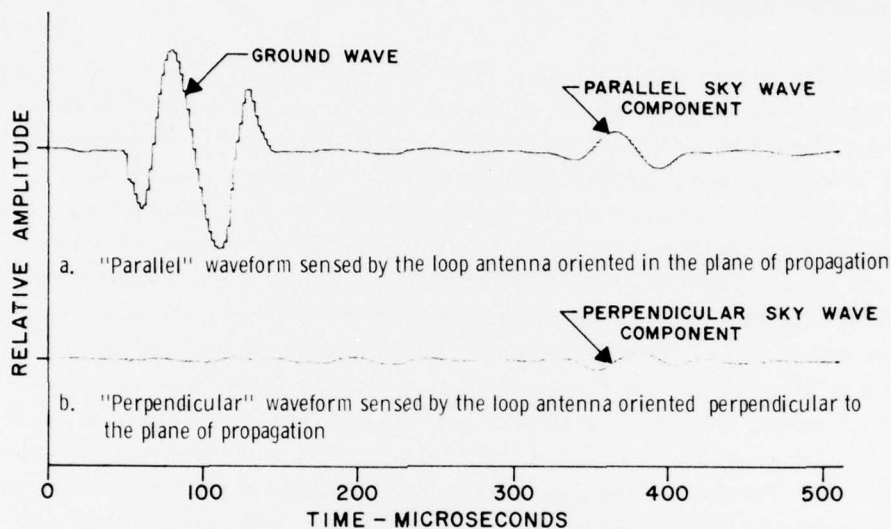


Figure 2. Example of the Observed Waveforms

Ionospheric reflection parameters are derived by computer (AFGL's CDC 6600) processing of the ground and ionospherically reflected waveforms with allowance made for factors such as ground conductivity, and antenna patterns (see Section 4).

Although the data are recorded about once per minute, for this paper the waveforms are averaged into 2-hr time blocks and the resulting information is presented in a weekly format (Figures 3 through 15) as described below.

2. OBSERVED WAVEFORMS

In part A of Figures 3 through 15, a set of averaged parallel and perpendicular waveforms is presented for the time block centered near local noon of the indicated day. Each of these waveforms is comprised of 256 digitally averaged points spaced 2 μsec apart. In part B of the Figures, the groundwave Fourier amplitudes are shown as a function of frequency. Although the data presented in parts C through L

of the figures are generally limited to frequencies in the first, or principal, lobe of the spectrum, information at higher frequencies can be used when sufficient signal to noise conditions exist. There is, however, a frequency range around each spectral null where insufficient signal exists for measurements.

3. REFLECTION HEIGHTS

The group mirror height (GMH) of reflection was obtained by determining the group delay of the skywave relative to the groundwave and attributing this time difference, by simple geometry (assuming a sharply bounded mirror-like ionosphere), to a difference in propagation distance. As discussed in Lewis et al,¹ the group delay can be defined as the rate of change of phase with frequency. For the GMH data presented in this paper, a finite frequency difference of 1.0 kHz was used, and the corresponding phase difference as a function of frequency for the groundwave and both skywave signals was obtained by Fourier analysis of the respective pulses. The GMH calculations took into account ground conductivity (10^{-3} mho/meter is assumed), and the corrections of Wait and Howe⁷ were applied.

Group mirror heights are plotted as a function of frequency in parts C and D of Figures 3 through 15, as obtained from the parallel and perpendicular waveforms, respectively. The GMH's are also presented as a function of time-of-day for the average frequency of 16.5 kHz in figures parts E and I. The parallel GMH's in part E are shown along with an average reflection height for reference purposes. Each point of the reference height is a weekly average, by time block, for the 7-day period indicated. The corresponding perpendicular GMH's, part I of the figures, are also shown with the weekly average for comparison. Part G gives the average, by time block, for the daily parallel GMH data of part E, and part K gives the corresponding perpendicular GMH averages from the daily data of part I.

4. REFLECTION COEFFICIENTS

Assuming that the ionosphere acts as a "mirror" at the GMH, plane wave reflection coefficients⁸ were obtained by comparing the ratio of the skywave Fourier amplitude at a specific frequency to that of the groundwave, taking into account the antenna patterns, wave spreading, earth curvature, ground conductivity, path lengths, and antenna patterns including ground image effects.

7. Wait, J. R., and Howe, H. H. (1956) Amplitude and Phase Curves for Ground-Wave Propagation in the Band 200 Cycles per Second to 500 Kilocycles Nat. Bur. Stand. U.S. Circ., p. 574.

8. Budden, K. G. (1961) Radio Waves in the Ionosphere, p. 85, Cambridge University Press, London.

The reflection coefficient $||R_{||}$ was obtained from analysis of the parallel sky-wave component and is plotted as a function of frequency in part C of Figures 3 through 15. The $||R_{||}$ coefficient for 16 kHz is plotted as a function of time-of-day in part F along with the average of the indicated week for reference purposes. From the perpendicular skywave pulse, the coefficient $||R_{\perp}$ was obtained and appears as a function of frequency in part D. The 16 kHz $||R_{\perp}$ is shown along with its reference in part J. Parts H and L present the average, by time block, of the daily $||R_{||}$ and $||R_{\perp}$ data presented in parts F and J, respectively.

For certain coefficient data points, plotted as asterisks (*), the reflection coefficient appears without a corresponding GMH. For these particular data, only the skywave-groundwave ratios could be obtained as the skywaves were too weak to provide reliable group delay information. The reflection coefficients were therefore estimated using a nominal GMH of 80 km in the calculations. These estimated coefficient values are included in the averages presented in parts H and L, but the assumed heights are not used in the GMH averages shown in parts G and K.

5. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

For purposes of comparison and interpretation, certain supplementary data are presented. Figure parts M and N give the received VLF phase and amplitude from the 17.8 kHz station NAA (transmitter location: Cutler, Maine), as observed at Thule AB over a 3500-km propagation path. Part O of the figures shows the magnitude of the horizontal component of the polar magnetic field observed with a three-axis fluxgate magnetometer, and part P presents 30-MHz riometer data, an indicator of D-region particle precipitation. These supplementary data were recorded at 30-sec intervals by AFGL's Geopole Observatory at Thule AB; the curves represent the average of 10-min periods. The solar zenith angle is given in part Q of Figures 3 - 15 for the indicated mid-week date.

6. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

It is noted that a very minor particle event occurred on DAY 325 (21 Nov). The effects associated with this disturbance can be seen in the ionospheric reflection heights and in the NAA phase and amplitude data. The event was too weak to show any appreciable absorption in the 30 MHz riometer data.

This report is one of a series.^{3,4,5,6} Comments and suggestions for improving its usefulness should be addressed to the VLF/ULF Techniques Branch (ETEE), Electromagnetic Sciences Division, Deputy for Electronic Technology (RADC/ETEE), Hanscom AFB, MA. 01731.

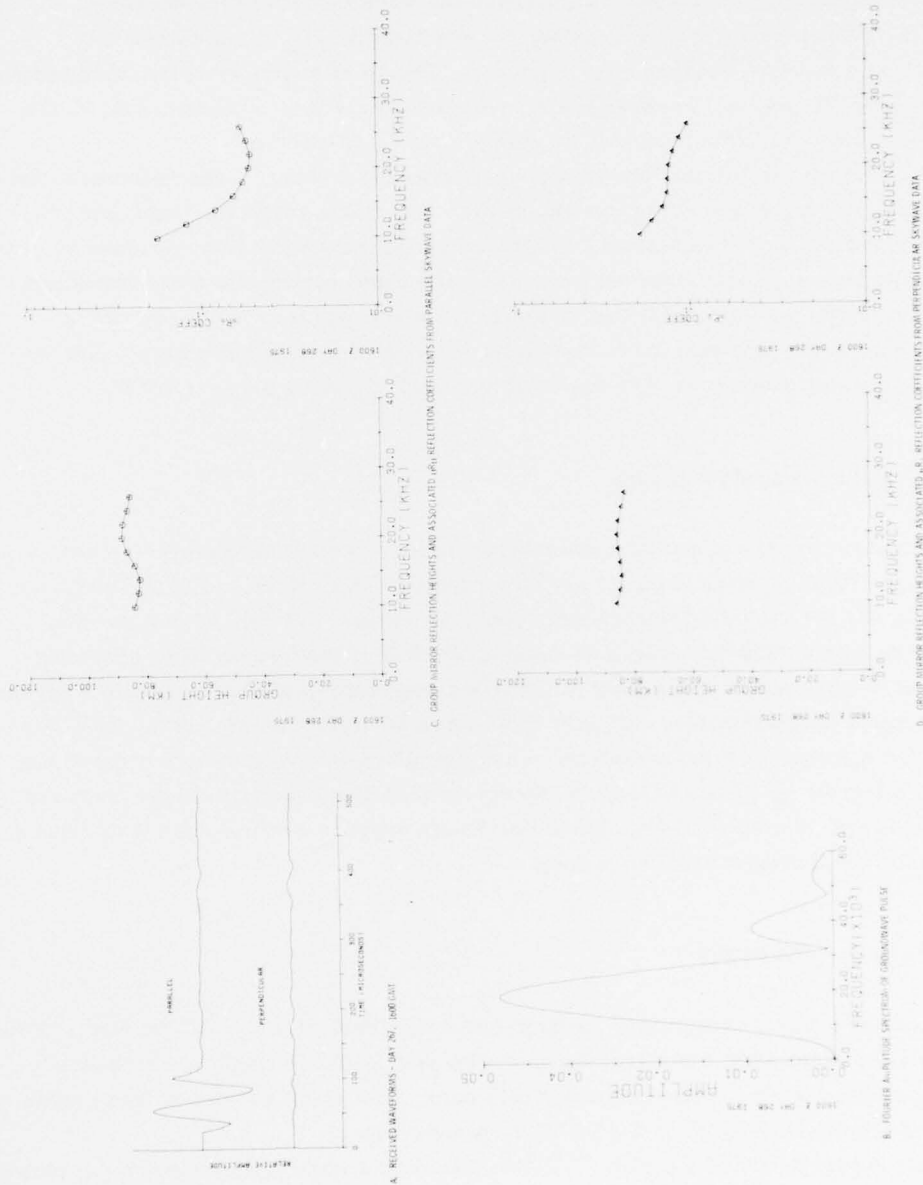


Figure 3. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 264 (21 Sep) - DAY 270 (27 Sep) 1975

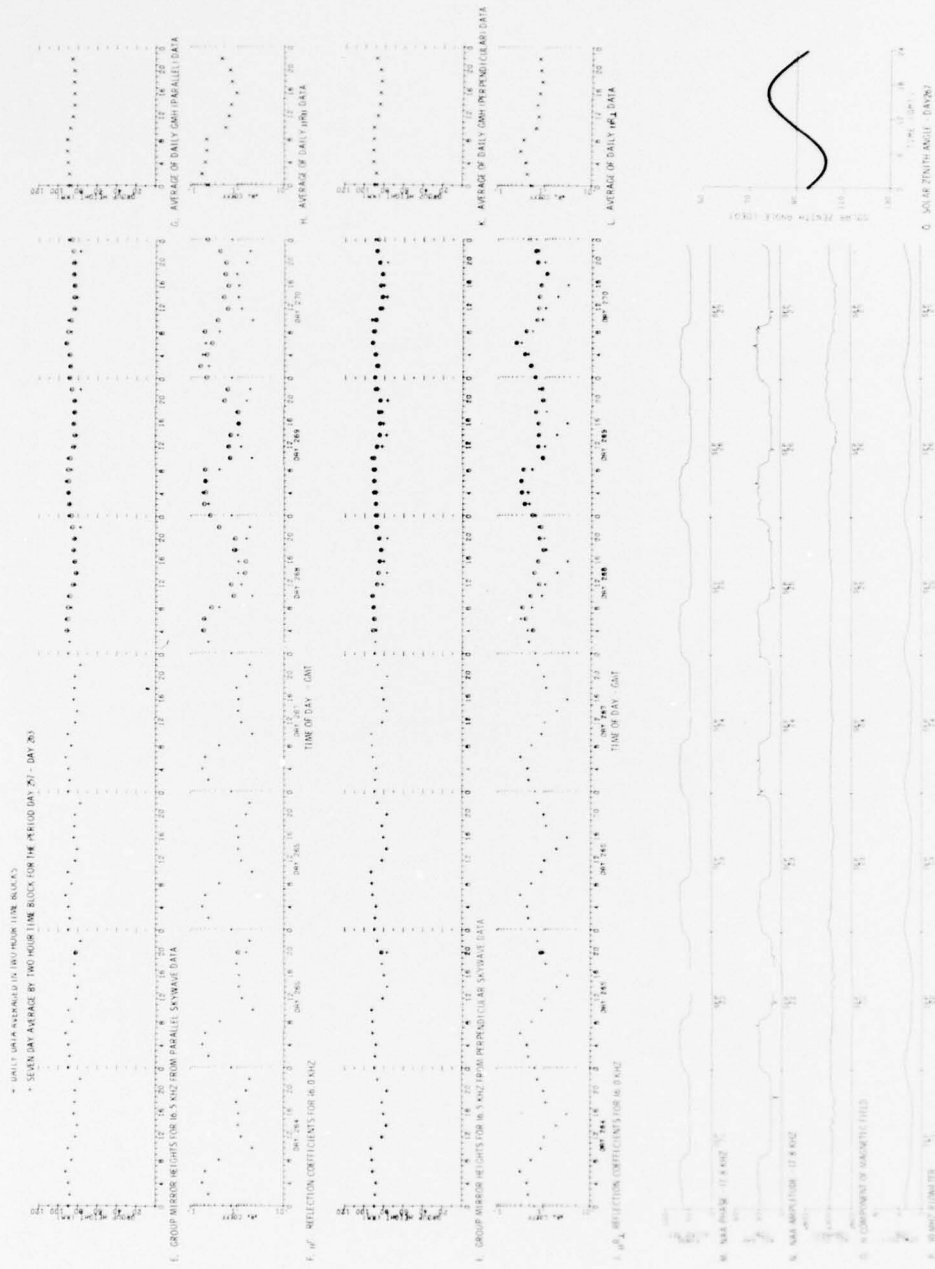


Figure 3. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 264 (21 Sep) - DAY 270 (27 Sep) 1975 (Contd)

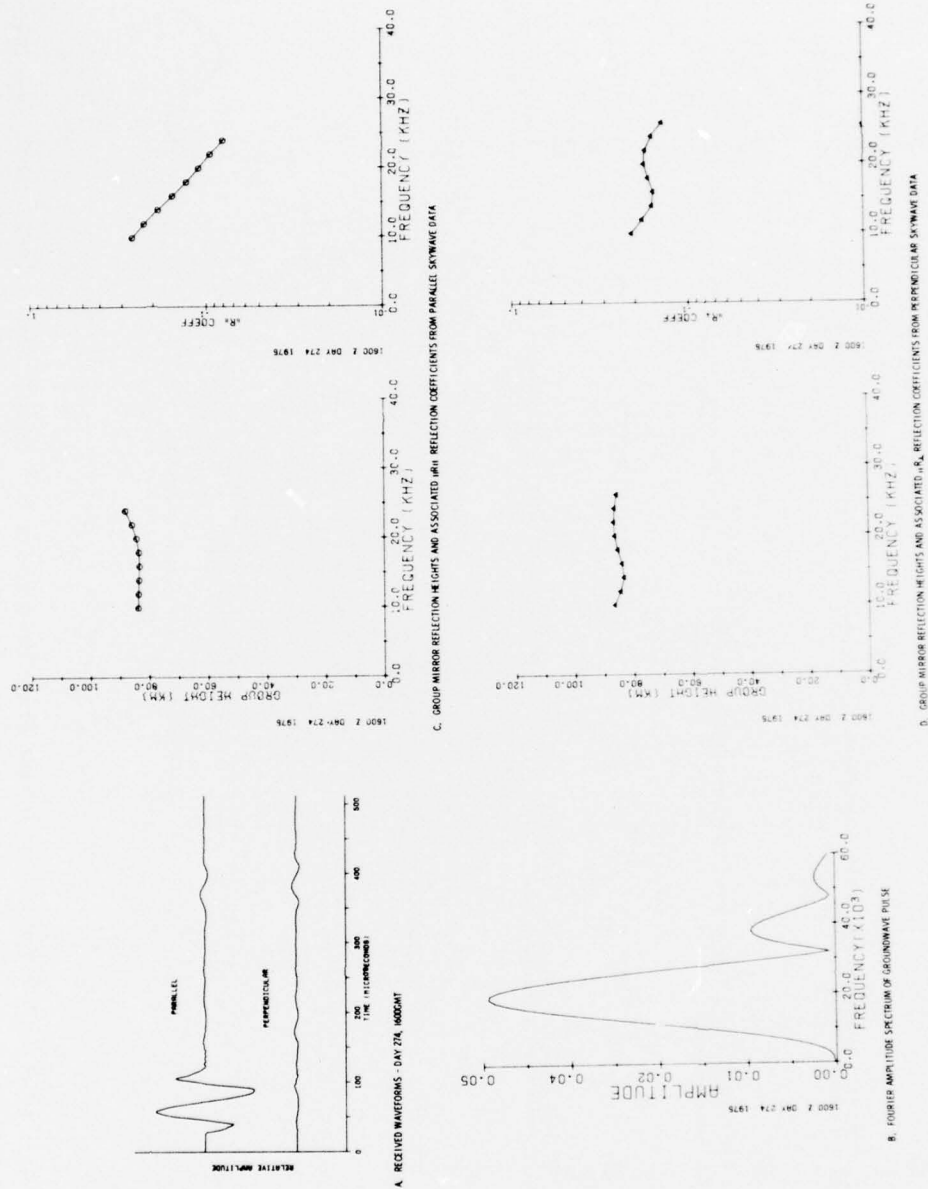
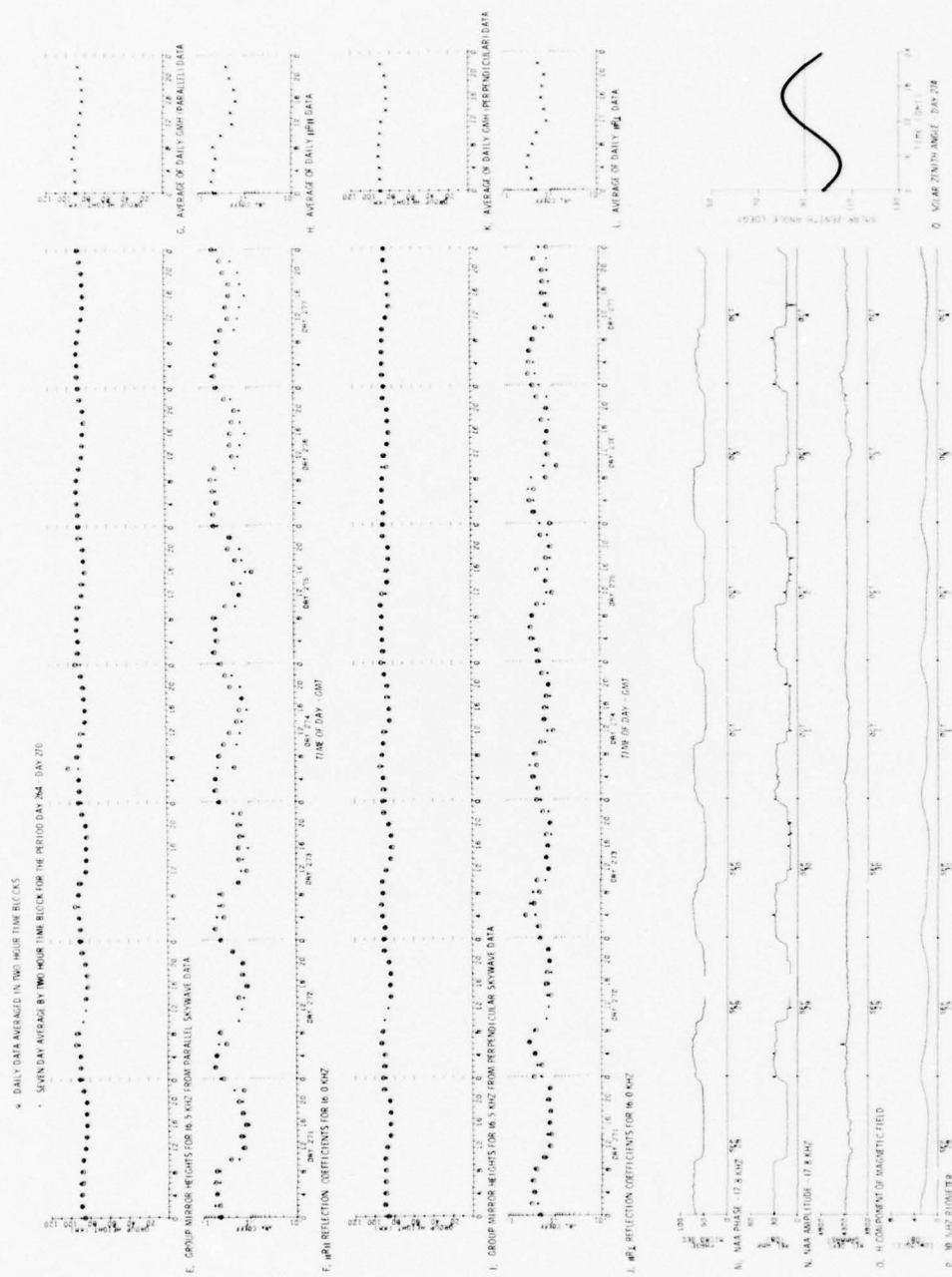


Figure 4. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 271 (28 Sep) - DAY 277 (4 Oct) 1975



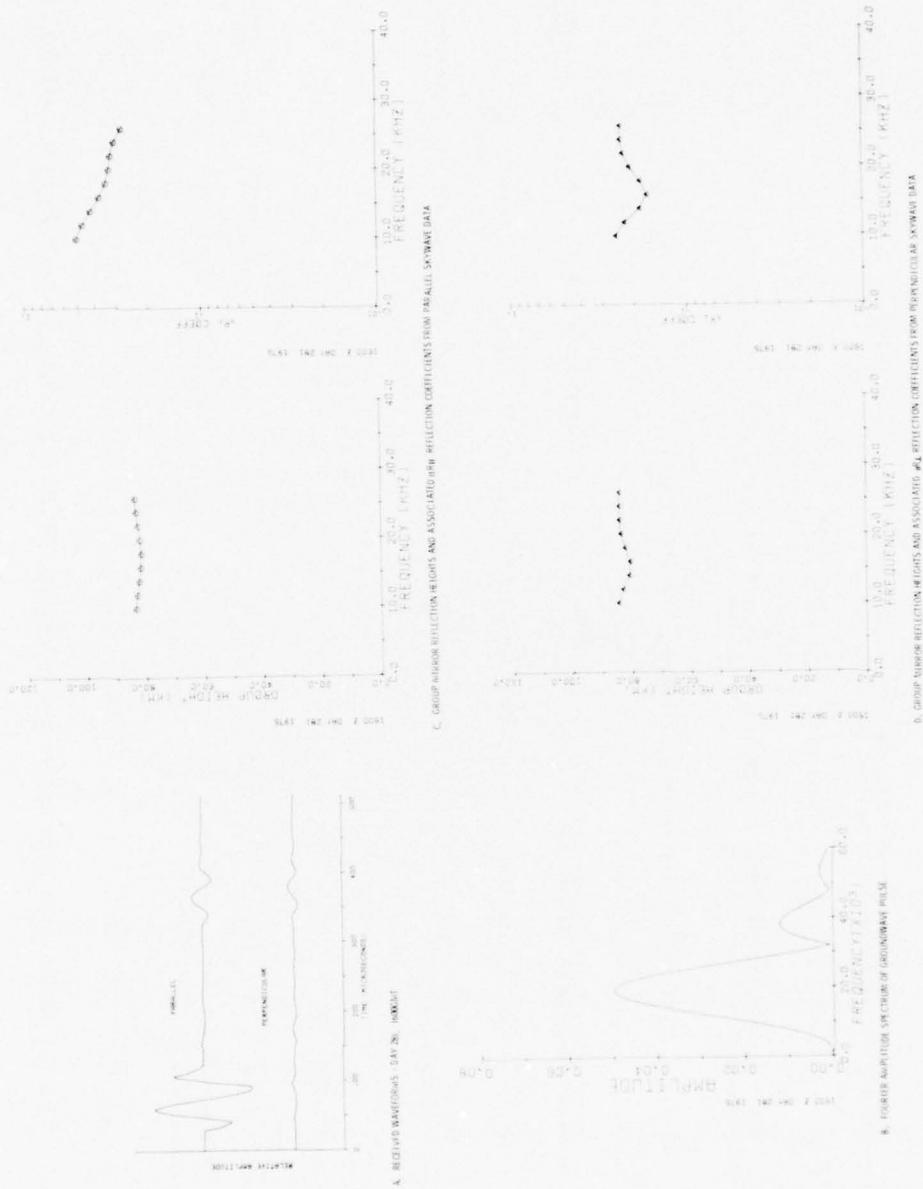


Figure 5. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 278 (5 Oct) - DAY 284 (11 Oct) 1975

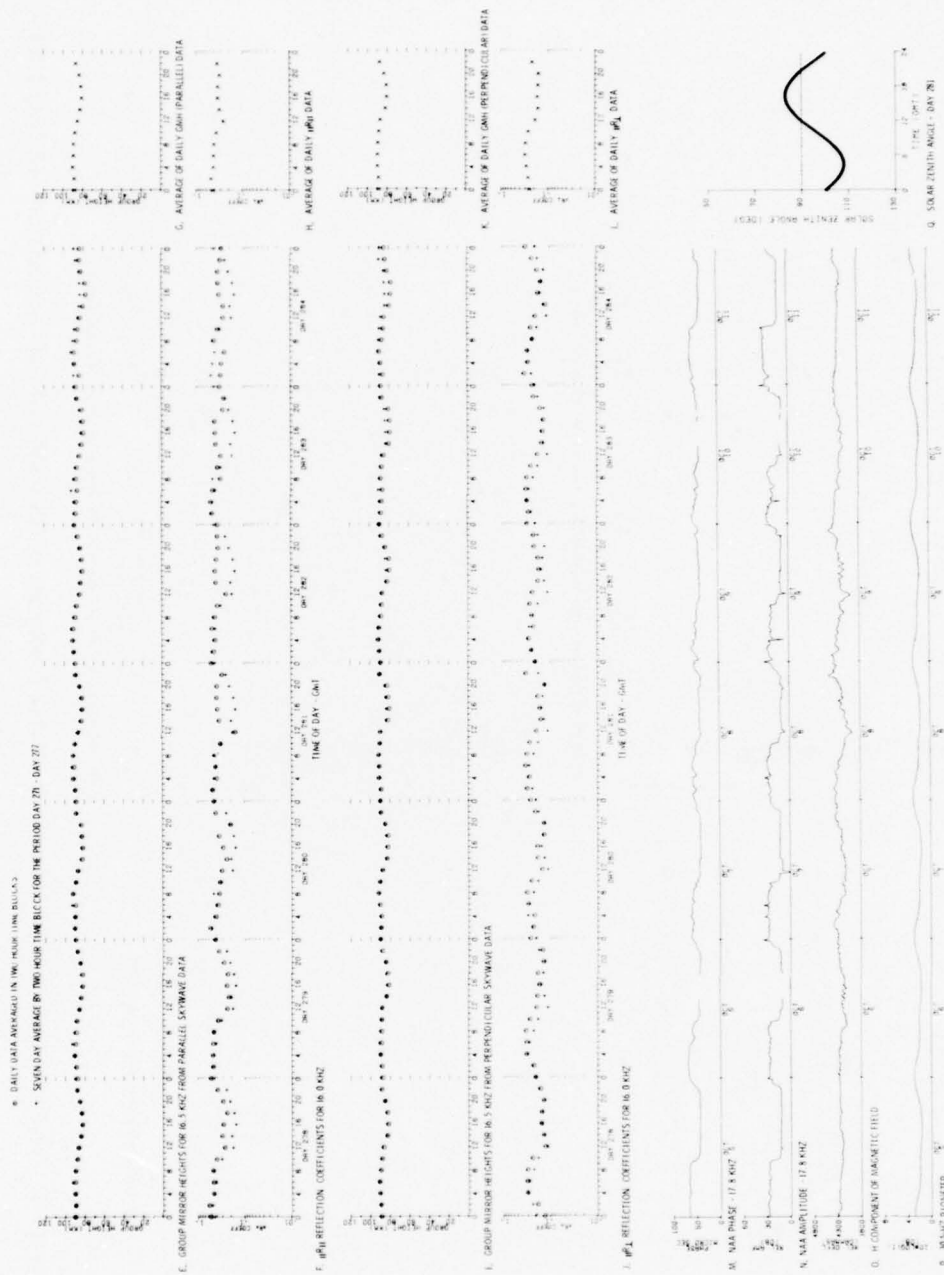


Figure 5. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 284 (11 Oct) 1975 (Contd)

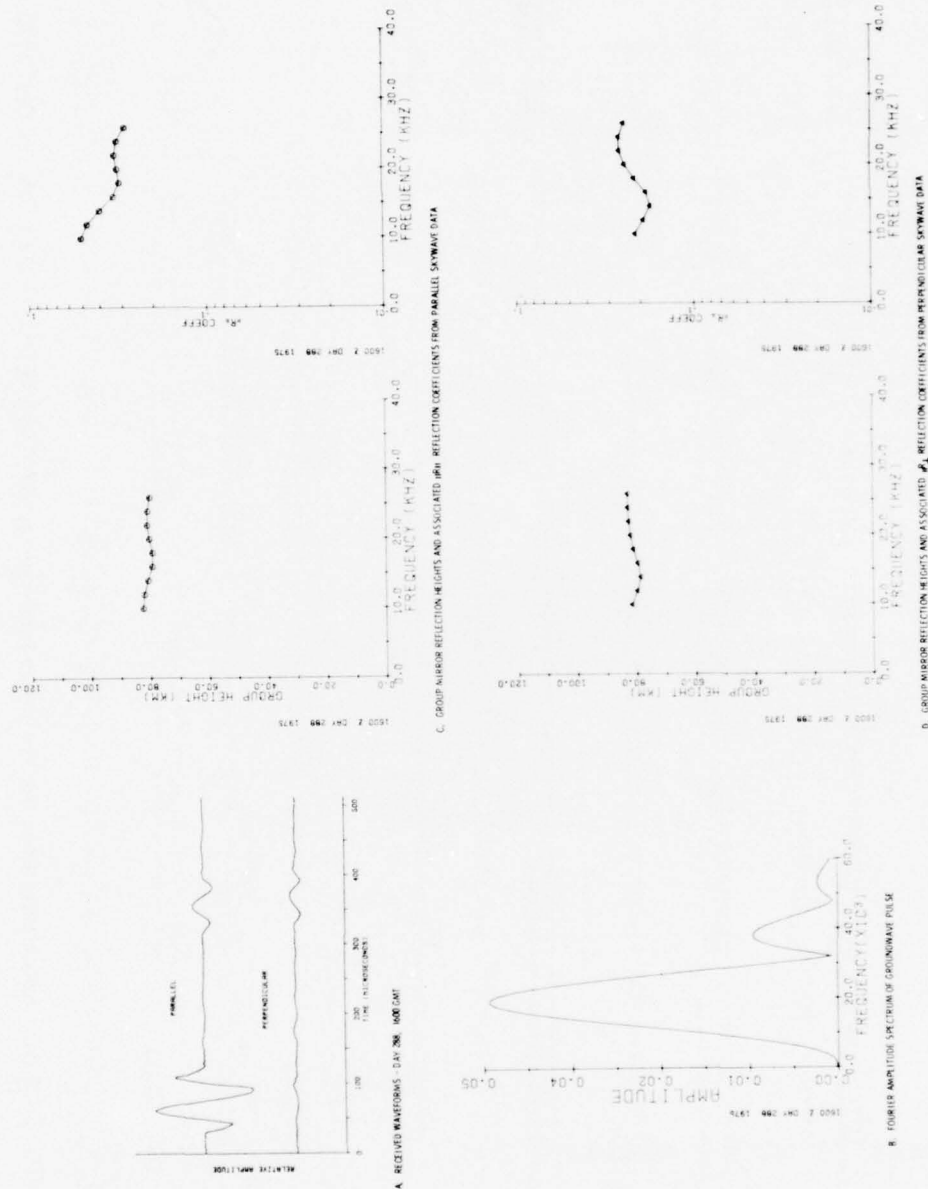


Figure 6. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 285 (12 Oct) - DAY 291 (18 Oct) 1975

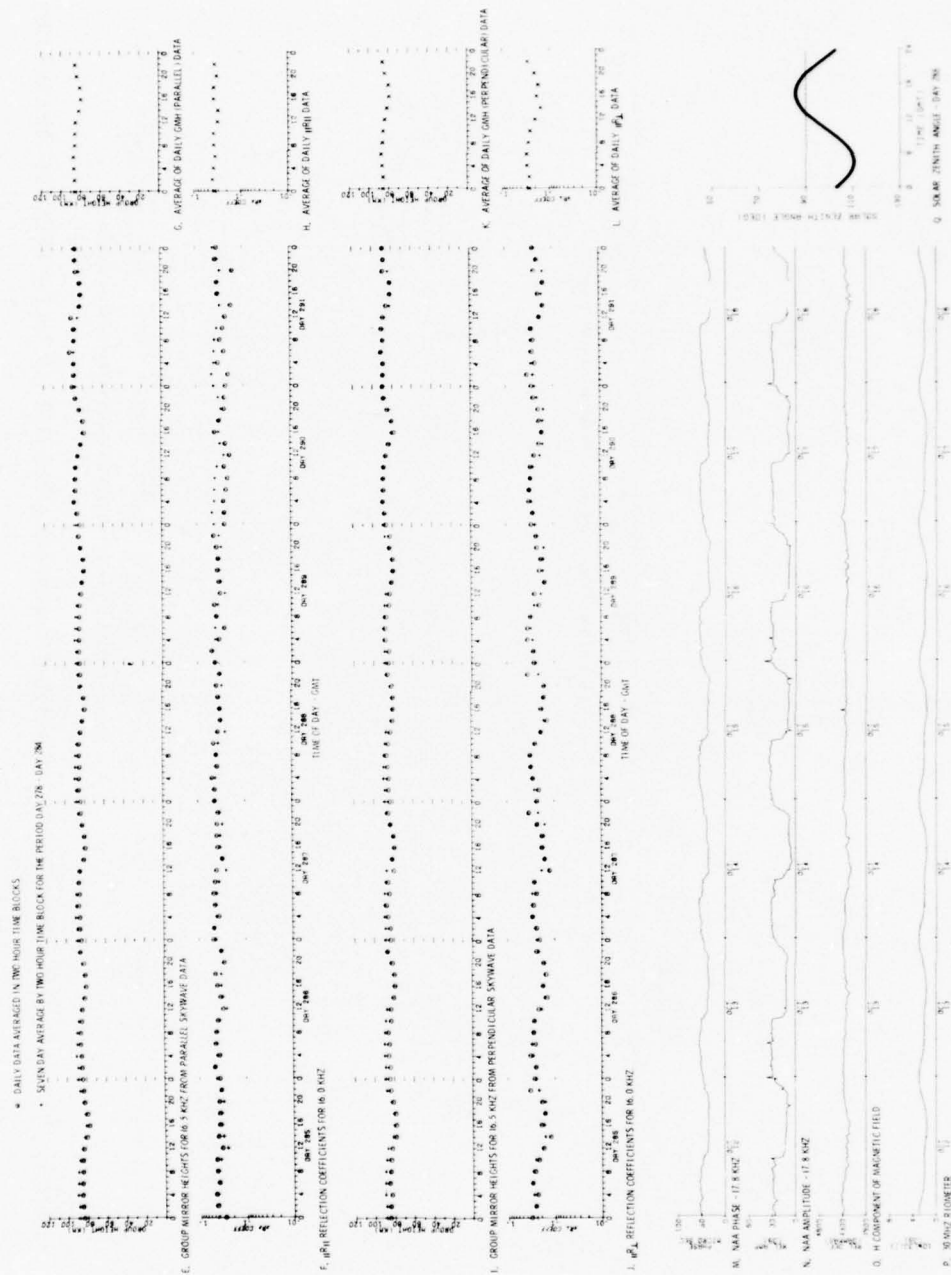


Figure 6. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 285 (12 Oct) - DAY 291 (18 Oct) 1975 (Cont)

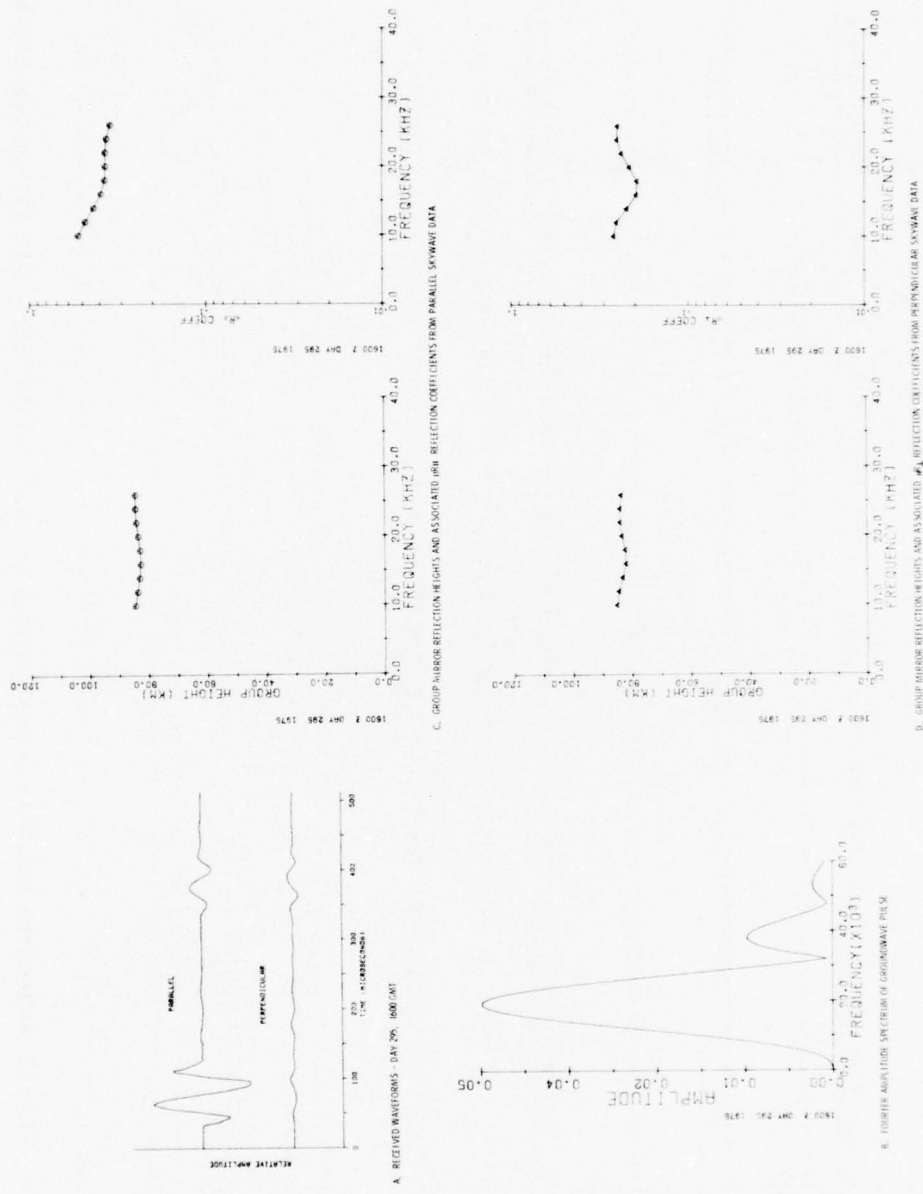
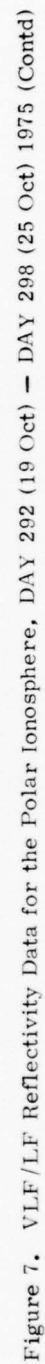


Figure 7. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 292 (19 Oct) - DAY 298 (25 Oct) 1975



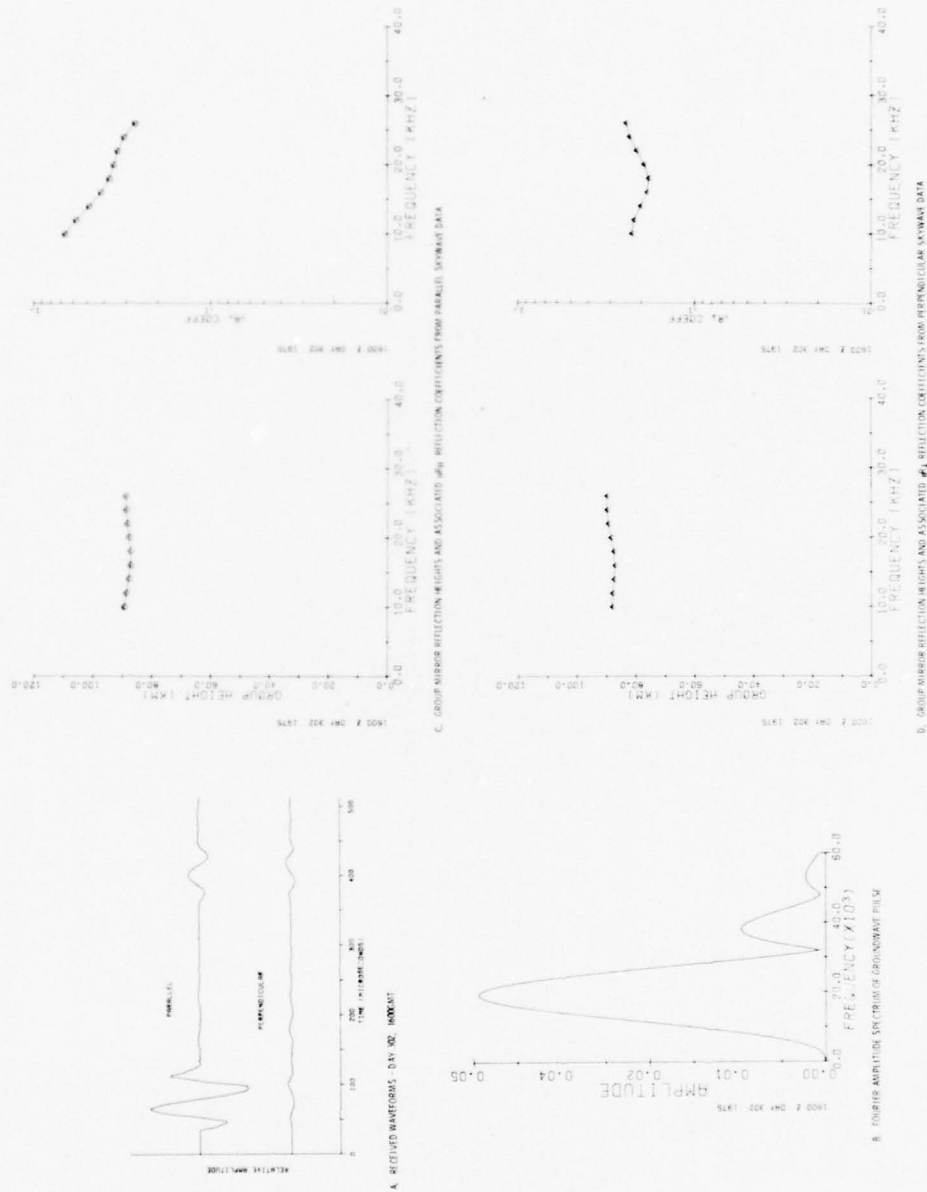
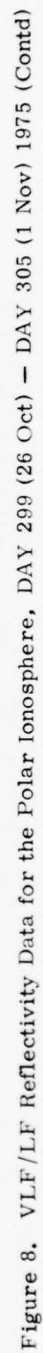


Figure 8. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 299 (26 Oct) - DAY 305 (1 Nov) 1975



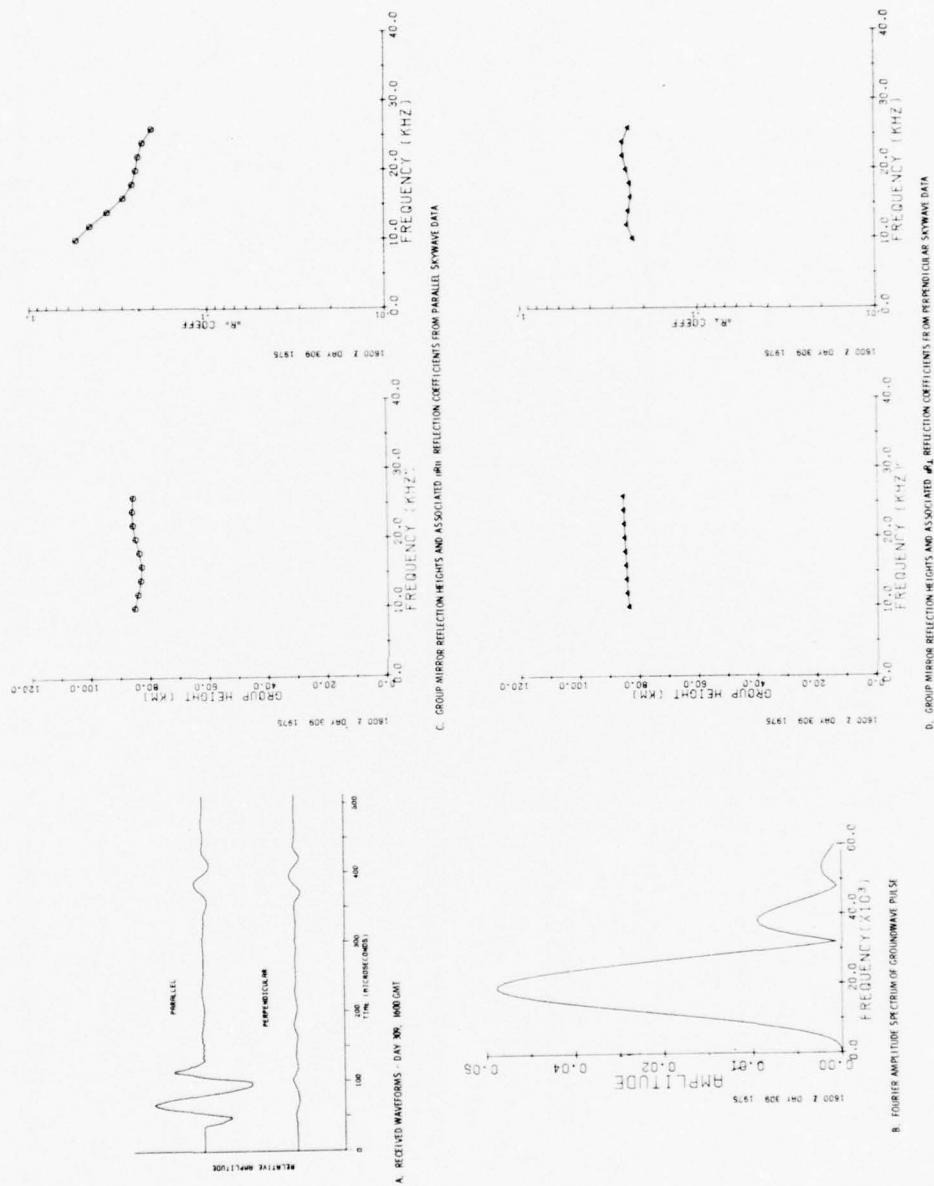


Figure 9. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 306 (2 Nov) - DAY 312 (8 Nov) 1975

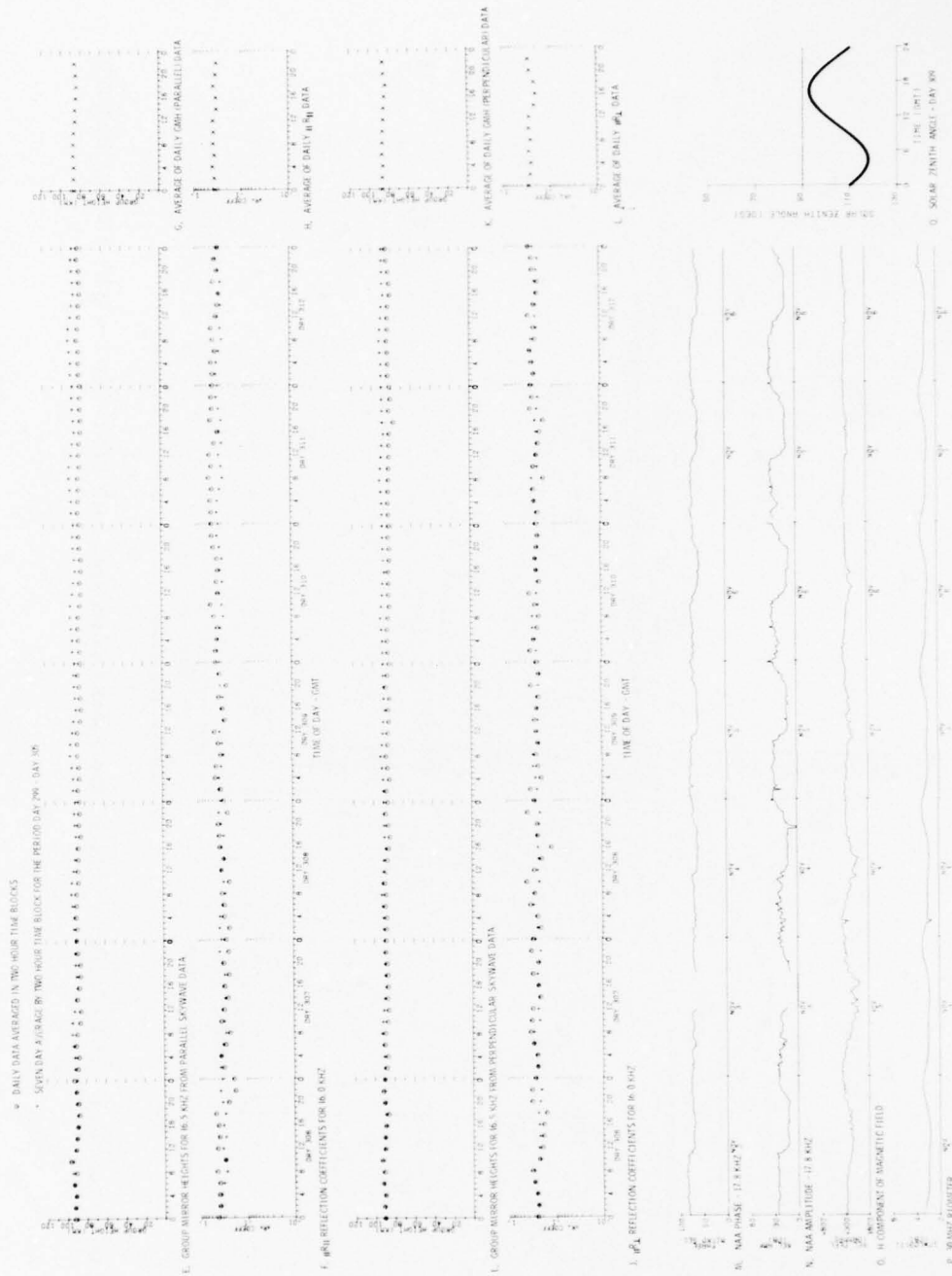


Figure 9. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 306 (2 Nov) - DAY 312 (8 Nov) 1975 (Contd)

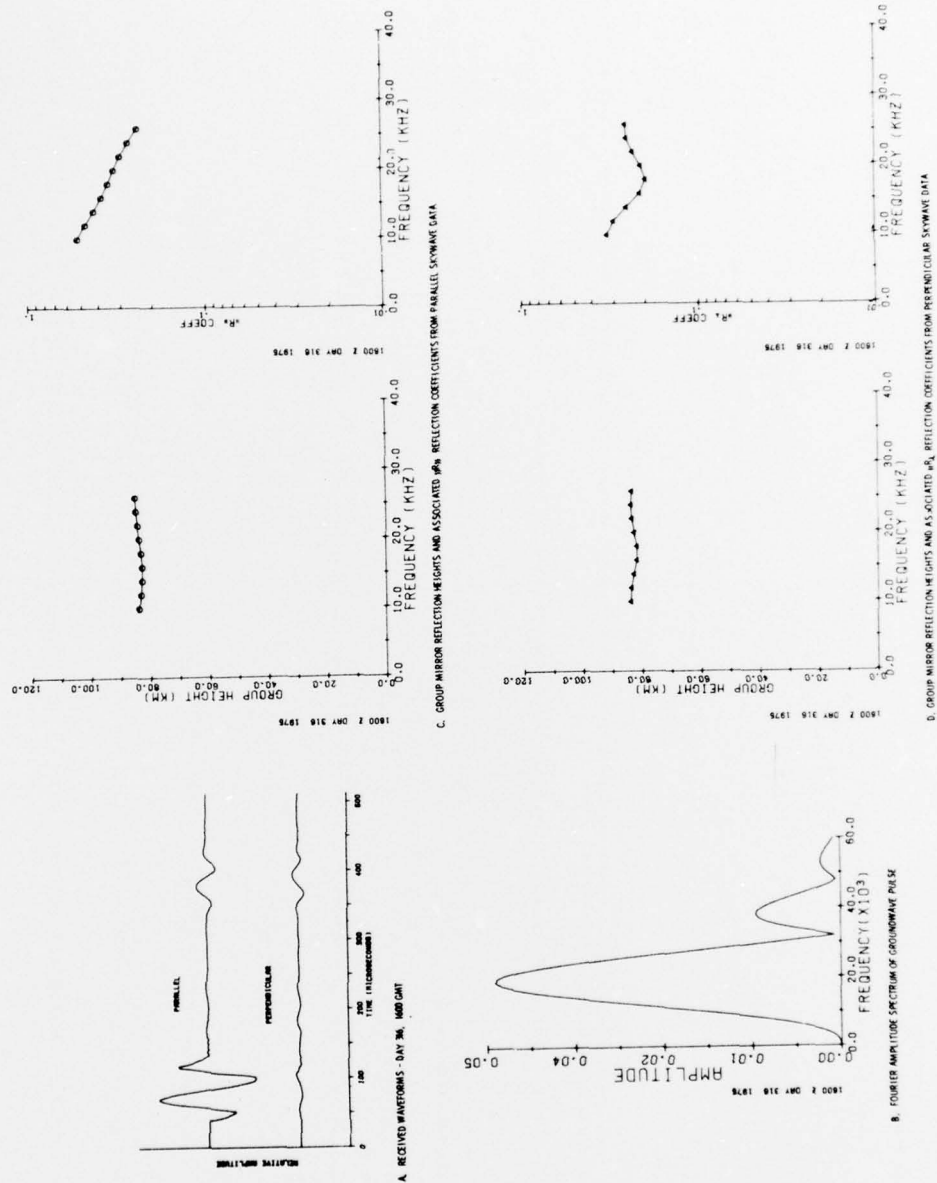


Figure 10. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 313 (9 Nov) - DAY 319 (15 Nov) 1975



Figure 10. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 313 (9 Nov) - DAY 319 (15 Nov) 1975 (Contd)

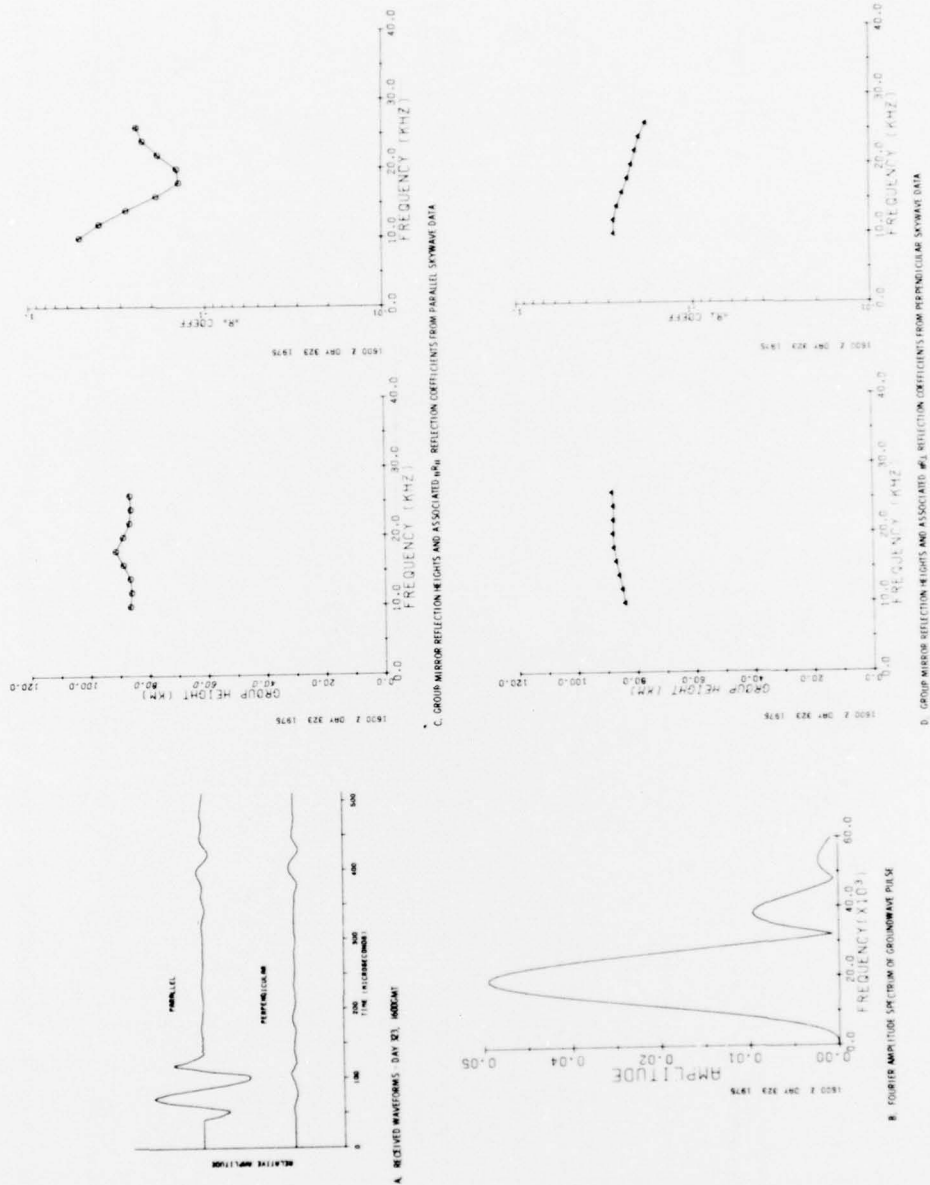


Figure 11. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 320 (16 Nov) - DAY 326 (22 Nov) 1975

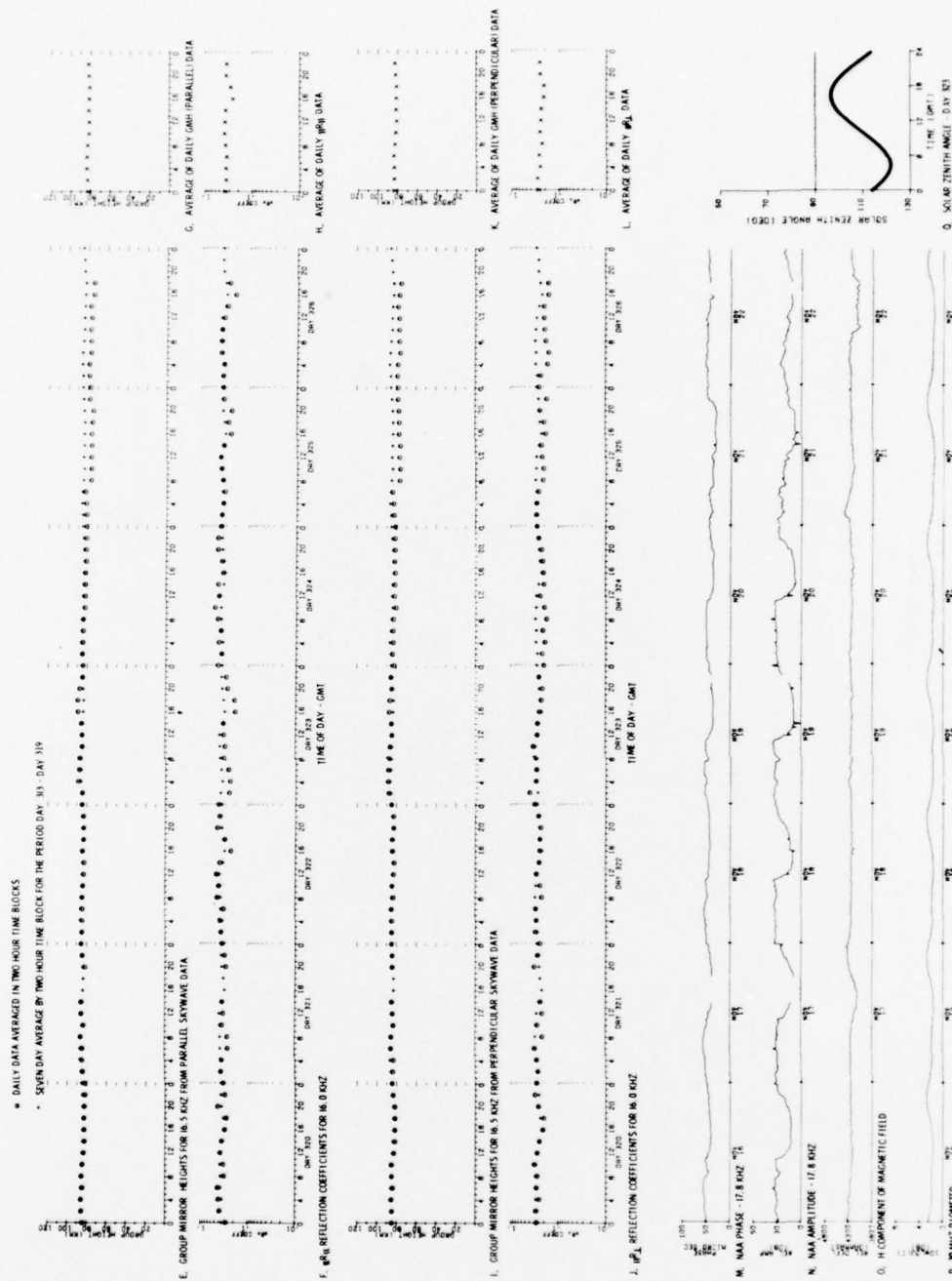


Figure 11. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 320 (16 Nov) - DAY 326 (22 Nov) 1975 (Contd)

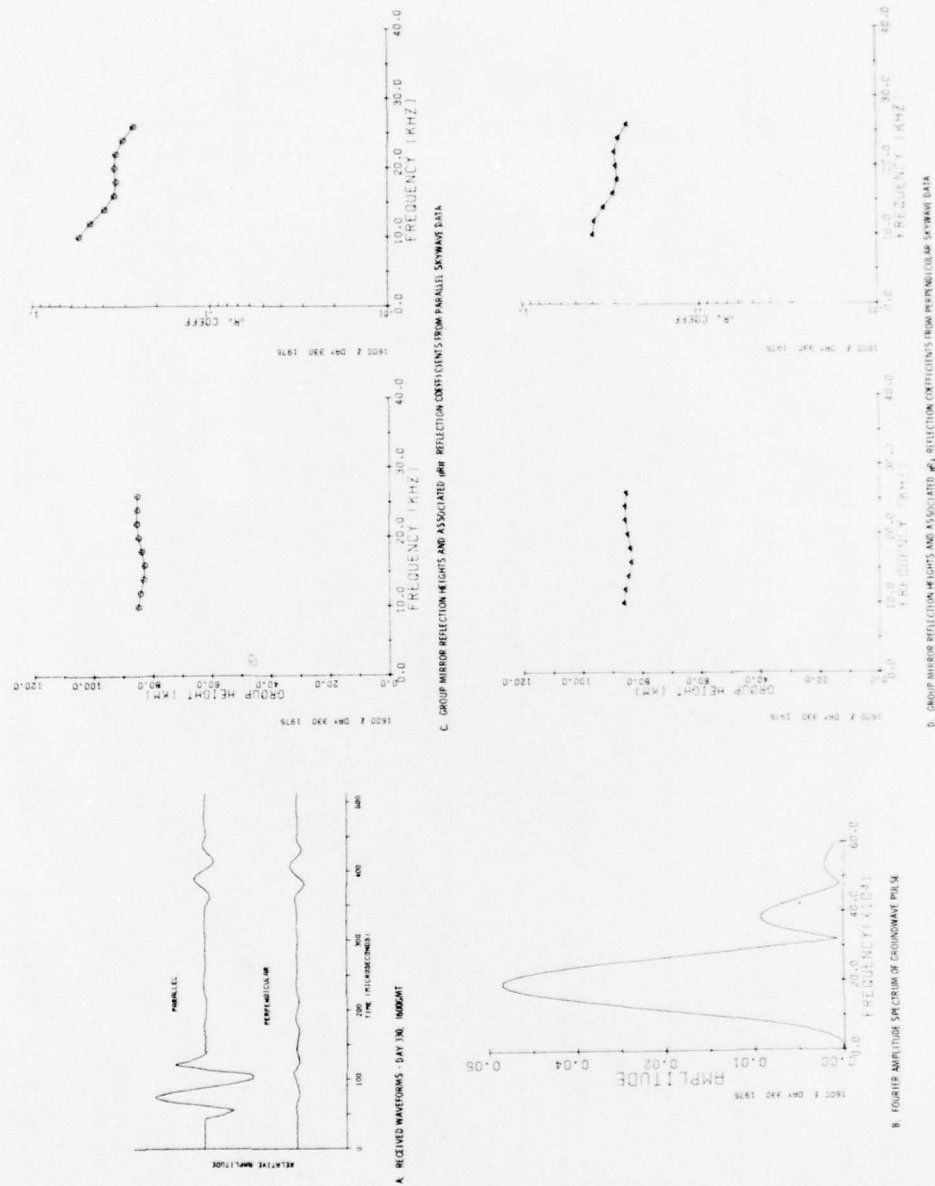


Figure 12. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 327 (23 Nov) — DAY 333 (29 Nov) 1975

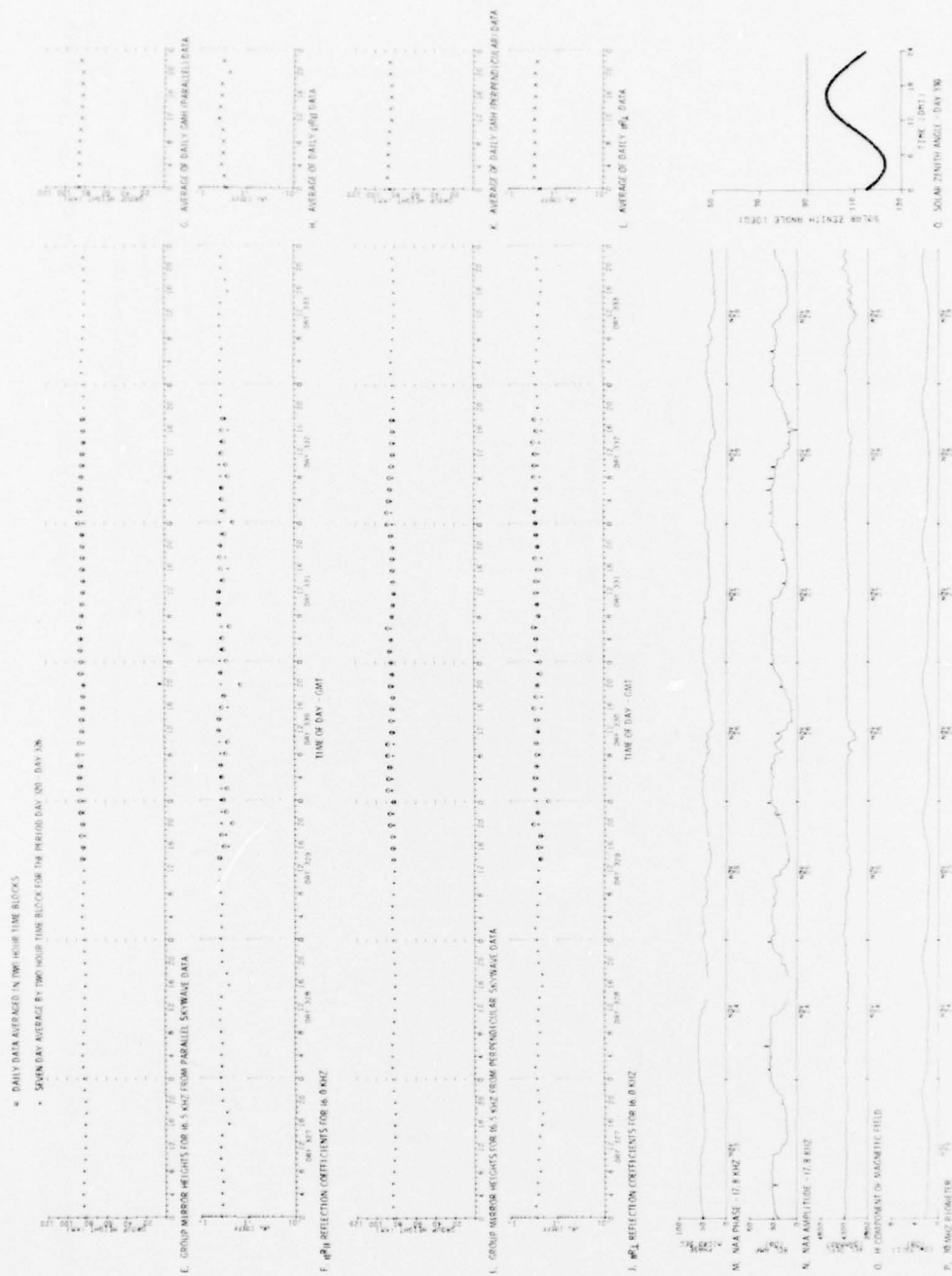


Figure 12. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 327 (23 Nov) - DAY 333 (20 Nov) 1975 (Contd)

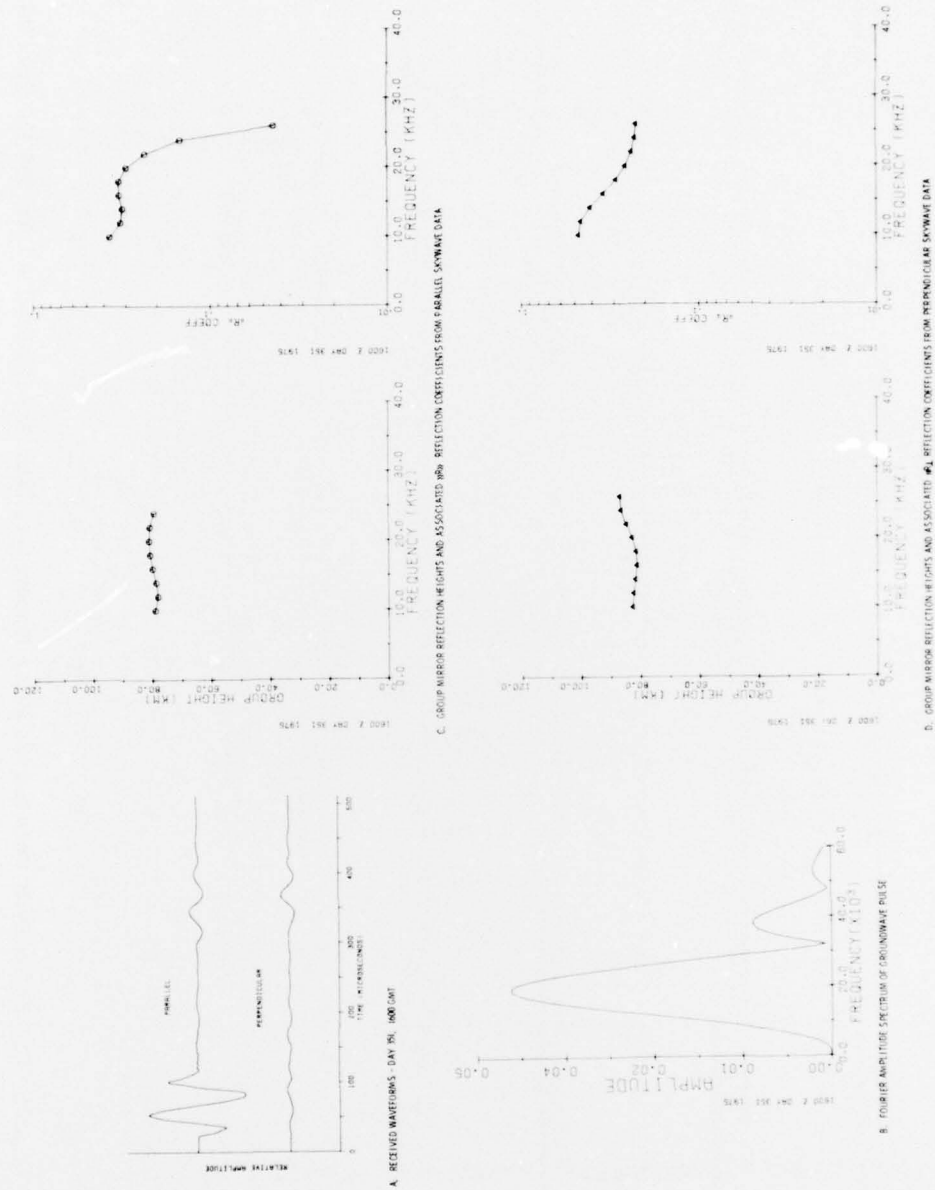


Figure 13. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 348 (14 Dec) - DAY 354 (20 Dec) 1975

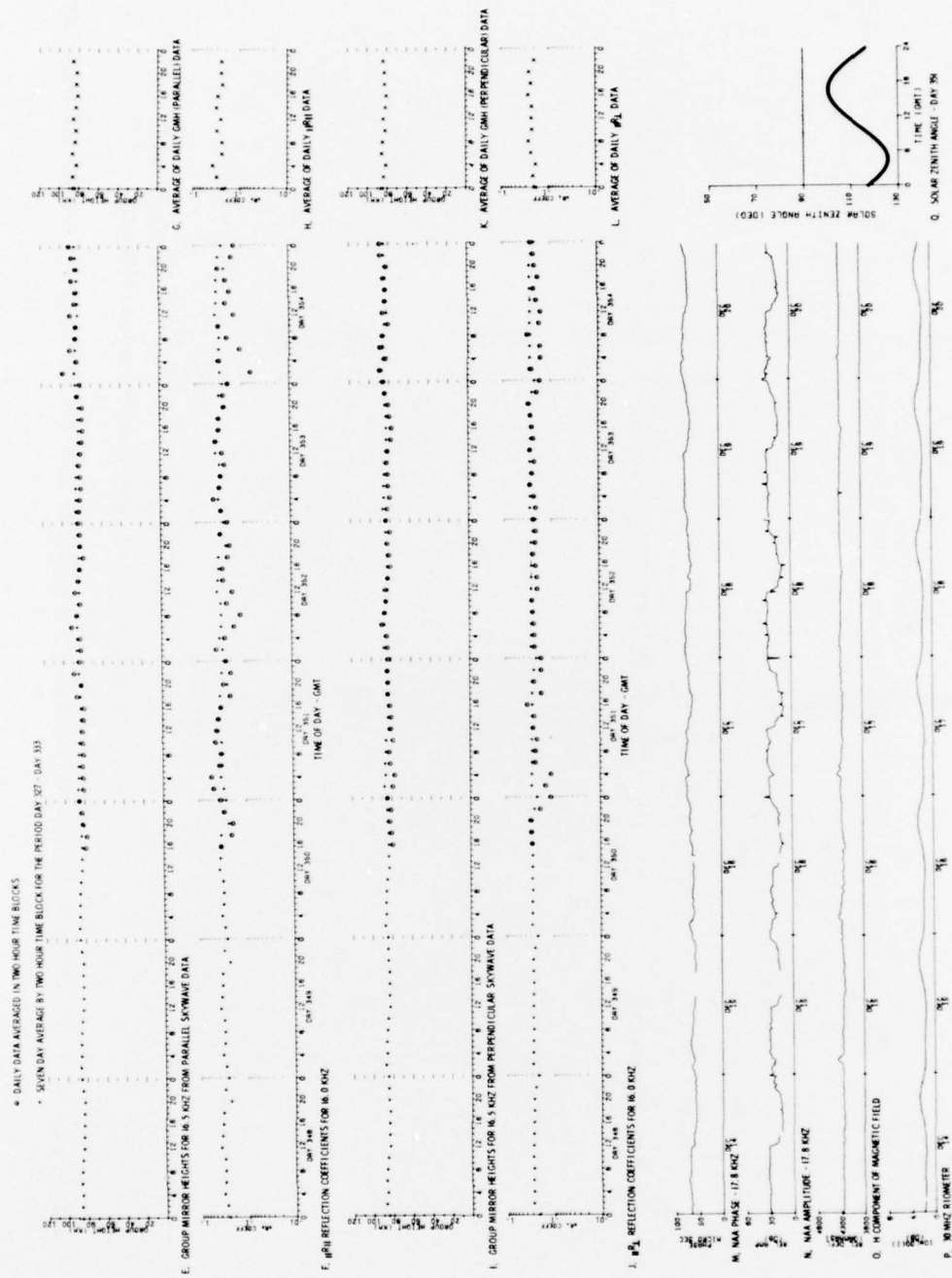


Figure 13. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 348 (14 Dec) - DAY 354 (20 Dec) 1975 (Contd)

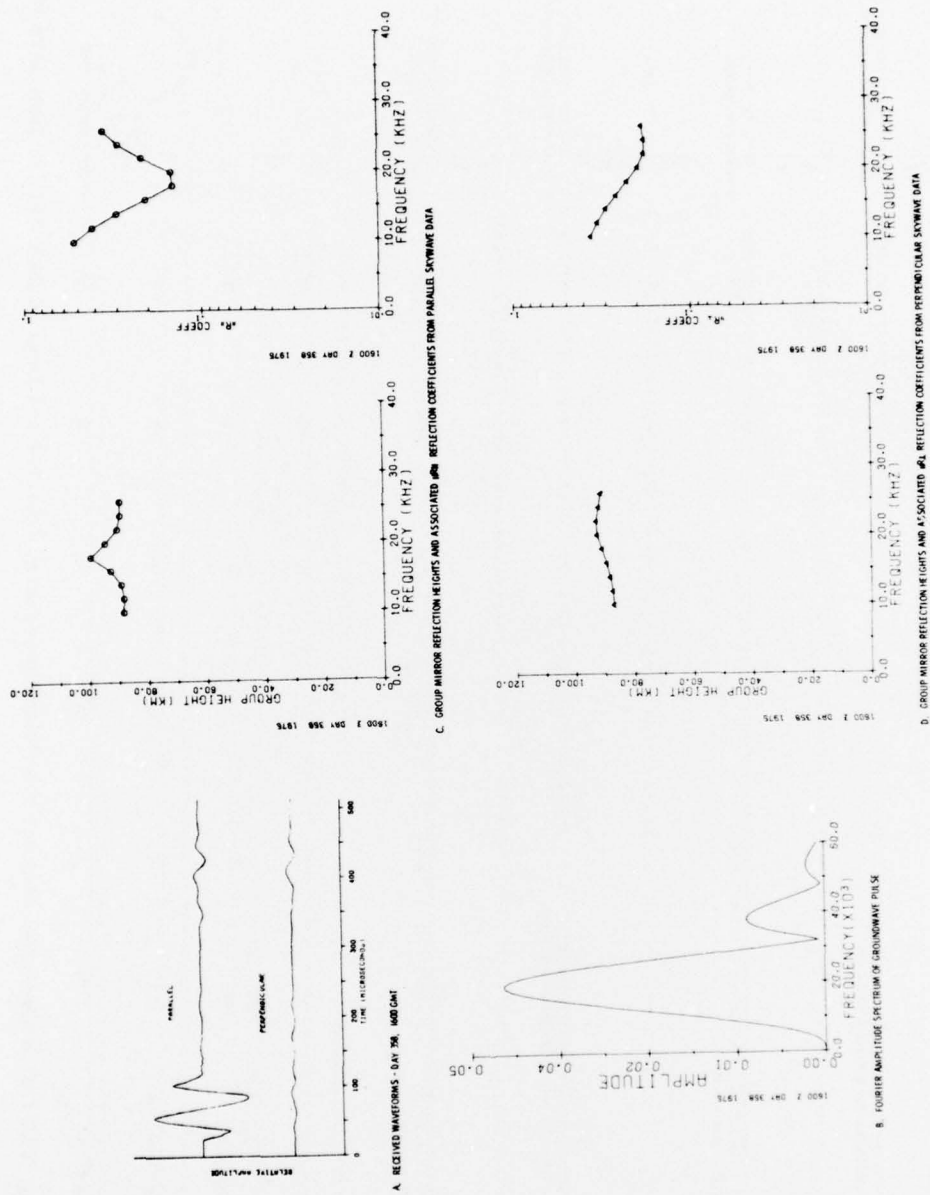
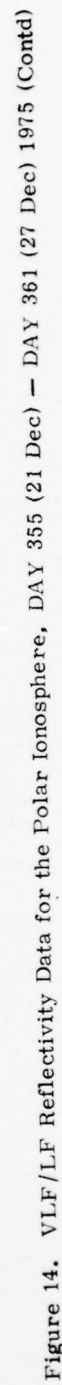


Figure 14. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 355 (21 Dec) - DAY 361 (27 Dec) 1975



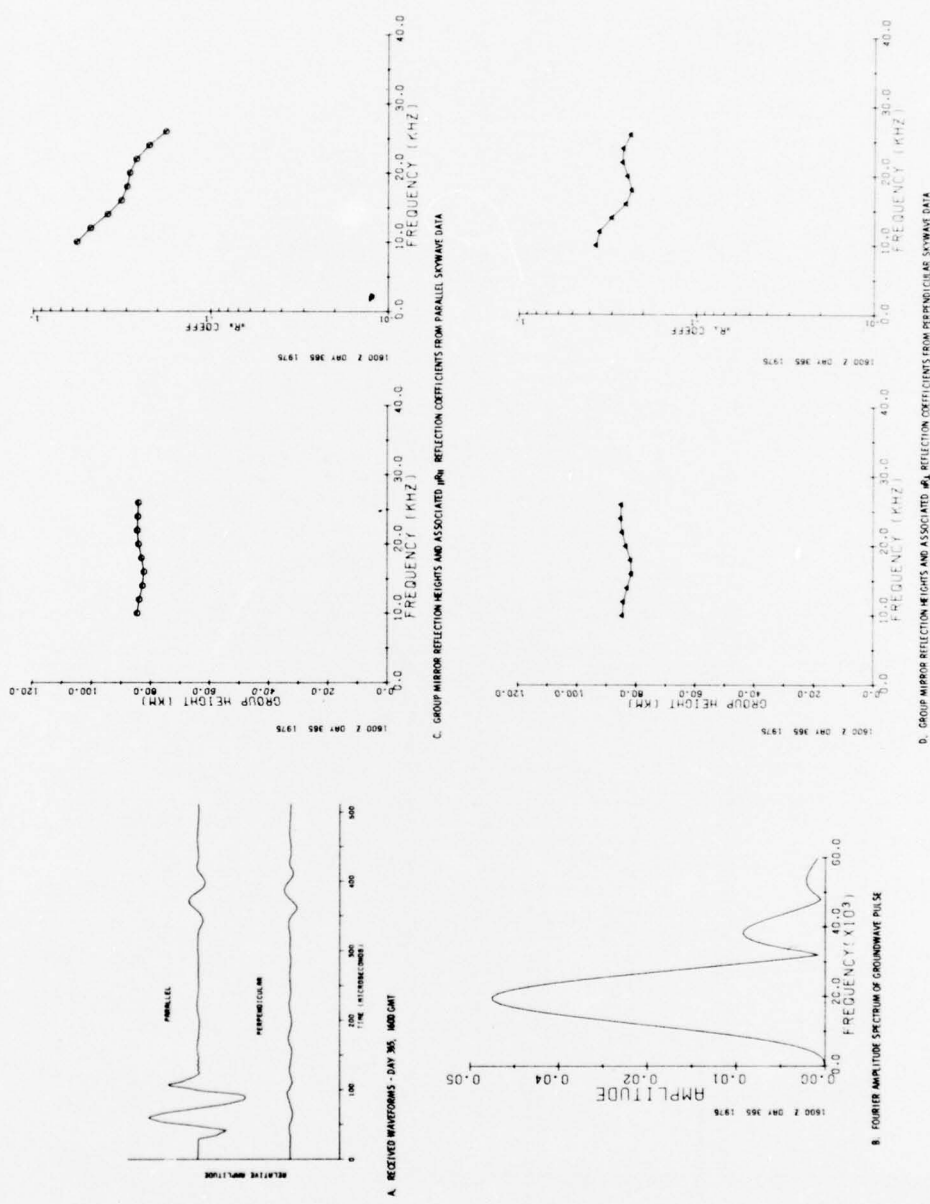


Figure 15. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 362 (28 Dec) 1975 - DAY 3 (3 Jan) 1976



Figure 15. VLF/LF Reflectivity Data for the Polar Ionosphere, DAY 362 (28 Dec) 1975 - DAY 3 (3 Jan) 1976 (Contd)

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